



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

CATEGORY: Community Wealth Building

Please DELETE those that are not applicable



Name of Council/Affiliate: Lewes District Council

Title: Building Community Wealth in Lewes

For the last 4 years Lewes DC has embraced a community wealth building approach to its work. This is about ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates, and how we work with our partners. We will continue to work with key local institutions; our county council, local businesses, police and NHS partners (anchor institutions) to change procurement practices to focus on local providers where possible. We aim to provide more local employment through all of our activities. We will support the development of social enterprises and identify where additional social value can be achieved in local communities.

Local Spending

In addition to an increase from £5.3m to nearly £10m in spending with local suppliers over the last financial year, the policy is also supporting local employment, with 95% of council staff (760 full time equivalents) living in East Sussex, more than a fifth of whom live in Lewes district.

A modular housing framework has been established for the council, and other councils, to use. Local contractor, Boutique Modern have, through this framework, been able to establish a substantial program of works, using modern sustainable construction techniques.

Use of land and assets

The council has moved its offices from Lewes to the vacant Marine Workshops in Newhaven, a former technical college, which was acquired by the council in June 2022 in order to support the regeneration of Newhaven town. The building is being developed into a mixed hub supporting marine and education, commercial space and new public space.

The council has maintained a presence in Lewes by repurposing a vacant shop in the town centre to provide a customer contact centre. Meanwhile, the former council office building in Lewes has been leased to Charleston Trust, an arts and heritage organisation who are using the building as a gallery and exhibition space which will contribute to community wealth by further developing the strong visitor and cultural economy of the town. Since opening its exhibition space in September 2023 Charleston in Lewes has welcomed more than 30,000 visitors and said early research indicates that three quarters of them have gone on to visit shops and other town attractions.



Figure 1: Southover House, former council offices now leased by Charleston Trust



Figure 2: Marine Workshops, former technical college and new site of council offices in Newhaven

Making financial power work for local places

Lewes District Council has secured a place on a national pilot scheme that allows the council a more flexible approach to how it uses £37 million in government funding allocations. Lewes District Council is one of only 10 local authorities nationally that has been invited onto the pilot. It consolidates the Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund capital funding programmes being delivered in Newhaven.

Most significantly, with a main contractor now appointed, the announcement accelerates updated proposals for Newhaven Square. This includes the relocation of two doctor's surgeries to new healthcare facilities and the expansion of Wave Active facilities at Seahaven Swim & Fitness to support the rehabilitation of patients and

promotion of healthier, more active lifestyles. Space for a new pharmacy and accommodation for a creative hub and start-up businesses are also part of the development.

Another aspect of the regeneration in Newhaven is the 'capturing the value of the catch' project in Newhaven. The project aims to: Provide two new fish landing stages to accommodate 16 small vessels from the Newhaven fishing fleet, build a New Centre of Excellence for Seafood Processing in the town including an auction room and marketplace, and create a new restaurant and community destination on the promenade area by West Beach. The purpose of this project is to retain spending in Newhaven for longer and stimulate a local market for fish, creating jobs and wealth locally.

Plural ownership of the economy

Encouraging entrepreneurialism is a fundamental component in building a resilient and vibrant economy. As a Community Wealth Building council, Lewes District Council is committed to developing and growing small enterprises, community organisations, co-operatives and municipal ownership, as locally owned enterprises are more likely to employ, buy and invest locally.

Building on the success of previous business start-up programmes funded by the Council since 2013, the Council is now looking to interested parties to come forward with proposals for the next phase of the Lewes District start-up programme. This entrepreneurial service will support any resident with a business idea or early-stage business, including those who want to develop a socially productive business, to give them the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to start and grow a successful enterprise in the Lewes district.

Conclusion

The council has affirmed its commitment to building community wealth in its new Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and intends to work with partners to develop further opportunities for generating and retaining wealth in the local economy, creating new jobs and livelihoods for residents.

For further information contact:

Peter Jenion

Project Manager – Community Wealth Development, Lewes District Council

Peter.jenion@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk